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ABSTRACT

The first section of this paper is a general discussion of standard English. The nine sections which follow discuss the concept of correctness and the ideological differences between grammarians and purists; standard English in a historical perspective; Eric Partridge's (1969) taxonomy of the degrees and kinds of standard English, including received standard, modified standard, and literary standard; standard American English and its history in relation to English spoken in England; the geographical settlement patterns of Americans and their effect on standard American English; the "melting pot" concept and its effect on standard English; the significance and validity of the melting pot theory regarding dialect; ethnicity and standard English; and the significance of bi-dialectalism and its effect on learning in general. The last section concludes that bi-dialectalism is a linguistic component of the poverty and minority syndrome and that teachers must be sensitive to many types of English. (TS)

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BI-DIALECTALISM IN AMERICA

Njoku E. Awa

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The Significance of Bi-Dialectalism in America

No one who has read the articles and books written by some American linguists and English language teachers can fail to be impressed by their deep concern for "standard English" dialect. They are worried about possible corruption or adulteration of "standard" English by the different minority groups in big cities. They are even concerned that the acquisition and use of non-standard English by slum-dwellers might affect - and in some cases drastically limit - their chances to secure jobs. This paternalistic response to a nagging social problem is, of course, expected of a highly cultivated group that is deeply concerned about the plight and welfare of less fortunate classes.

Viewed from another perspective, it would seem that these great custodians of the King's English are advocating standardization of a particular variant of several "standard" English dialects in America. This is laudable, for it would eliminate most of the dialectal barriers affecting communication among people from different linguistic communities in the country. But standardization in general involves not only acceptance of specific grammatical and pronunication patterns but adoption of a common orthography. Furthermore, it implies standardization of vocabulary, and probably the enactment of stern enforcement laws.

For those who live in a world of idealism, this represents the best proposition for the solution of a serious social problem. But it raises the perennial question: What is "correct" or "standard" English dialect?

The Concept of Correctness

All through the ages, eminent grammarians and "purists" have reproved some individuals and groups for defying the rules of grammar and syntax in written and spoken language. Such judgment usually smacks of arrogance. Sir Ernest Gowers (1954) makes reference to the Society for Pure English, which appealed for the support of everyone who "would preserve all the richness of differentiation in our vocabulary, its nice grammatical usages and its traditional idioms, but would oppose whatever is slipshod and careless, and all blurring of hard-won distinctions, and oppose no less the tyranny of schoolmasters and grammarians, both in their pedantic conservatism and in their enforcing of new-fangled rules." (Gowers, 1954: 49).

This suggests a basic ideological difference between grammarians and purists in their views about standard or correct English. It is difficult for a layman like the author to understand why modern grammarians are fulminating against the misuse of grammatical rules by some individuals and groups, especially in this age when grammarians are claimed to be more descriptive and (therefore) less prescriptive than their intellectual forebears. Besides, they are the ones expected to espouse the view that living languages are susceptible to change.

Purists, on the other hand, are apt to be indignant when the "standard" English they know is threatened with invasion by terms originating from the lowest strata of the social structure. It is common knowledge that most purists come from the cultured class, and thus new words originating from this class are more likely to receive social endorsement than those originating from the lower classes.

Despite their belief in the flexibility and dynamism of language,

purists tend to give the impression that as long as they live, "language shall not be corrupted" either by the intrusion of new words or modification of the meaning of old ones. It is this sense of linguistic conservatism that impels purists to pass ethnocentric judgment on communicators whose choice of terms savors of carelessness. Yet every purist knows that "correctness" is relative to a number of factors, among them the dialectal communities within a social system, the different classes of people in it, and, above all, time.

The futility (if not arrogance) of the efforts of movements for standartization is clearly underscored by Dr. Samuel Johnson's remarks:

> Academics have been instituted to guard the avenues of the languages, to retain fugitives and to repulse invaders; but their vigilance and activity have been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtile for legal restraints, to enchain syllables and to lash the wind are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by its strength. (Quoted in Gowers, 1954: 49).

Dr. Johnson was writing about the vanity of the campaign by some English movements to resist new terms and thereby keep their language static. He was perceptive enough to see the innumerable hurdles that had to be overcome in order to gain conformity to an established standard English.

If standardization has not quite succeeded in England, which is relatively more homogeneous than the United States, one wonders how American purists can accomplish their objectives amid the diversities that characterize this society. Even if the comparison is made between the United States and the whole United Kingdom (comprising England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), the former remains more heterogeneous in many respects than the latter.

Consider, by way of exemplification, the size and population of each. The United Kingdom has an area of about 94,214 square miles with a population of some 56,000,000 people; the United States, on the other hand, has an area

of 3,617,204 square miles and a population of 204,600,000 (Foster, 1971). This says nothing about diversities in sub-cultural beliefs and religious orientations, and the impact of these on the values which some ethnic groups develop in their search for identity. Thus, while diversity is an asset in the economic and industrial life of a social system, it is a liability in the linguistic and cultural integration of its people.

Standard (Correct) English in Historical Perspective

Before the Normal Conquest of 1066, English had a standard form (Partridge, 1969). During the two centuries following William's conquest of England, the standard form of Old English was no longer in use. Besides, French had gained such popularity and wide acceptance in England that had it not been for the revival of nationalist feeling in England under Edward I and Edward III, the concept of standard English would have been buried in the pages of Old English history. However, by the end of the 14th century, English regained its original prestige and a standard "literary" form was adopted in Parliament, in schools, and in law courts.

The dialect adopted was the East Midland variant, which served as a "mid-way compromise" between the two divergent dialects of the North and the South (McKnight, 1923, cited in Partridge, 1969: 303). Among the factors which combined to make the East Midland dialect more adoptable than the Northern or the Southern dialects were two that deserve special mention. First, because of its location between the North and the South, the East Midland had a dialect that was understandable to Northerners and Southerners alike. Second, the East Midland dialect had "very little of the rather drawling softness of the Southern" and nothing of the "harshness of the Northern dialects" (Partridge, 1969: 303).

As would be expected, this literary standard appealed to the cultured class, and especially to England's most venerable institutions of higher learning, Oxford and Cambridge. London adopted the dialect too, and by the 15th century the East Midland dialect had been established as the "correct" English.

It was not until the latter part of the 18th century that grammarians and lexicographers began to publish books designed to regularize the English language in syntactic and phonological terms. Since then, English grammar has been taught in English schools and good dictionaries have provided not only standard definitions of words but etymological and phonological information.

Taxonomy of Standard English

Drawing from the work of Professor H.C.K. Wyld, author of The Growth of English, Eric Partridge (1969) presents a taxonomy of the degrees and kinds of Standard English. The first kind of Standard English is Received Standard, which is taught in British public schools. It is considered the 'best' because it enjoys the widest currency and is spoken without discernible regional accents by the "better" class.

The second is Modified Standard, which, as the name implies, is a modified, altered, or changed version. It has some of the characteristics of American English, namely: regional, social, and sub-cultural versions. It is standard English that is modified by each locality to optimize message effects, and no form of it is shared by different classes or speech communities.

The third is Literary Standard. Concerning this kind, Partridge comments: "It is necessary only to say that it is the more conventional, stylized, and

dignified, more accurate and logical, sometimes the more beautiful form that Received Standard assumes, like evening dress, for important occasions; it is also more rhythmical and musical", (1969: 304). The main difference between Received Standard English and Literary English lies in the former's accent on ennunication and pronunciation and the latter's restriction to written form.

Neither Standard nor Literary English permits the use of colloquial and kindred (non-standard) terms.

It is often difficult to classify the English spoken in Canada, Australia and other Commonwealth countries, such as the former British colonies in Africa and Asia. There are likely to be several Modified versions both in the Dominions and in former British Colonies. In general, the tendency is to adhere to the norms of Received Standard especially among the educated class. The extent to which Literary Standard is used will probably depend on the degree of aesthetic value attached to this form by different writers.

Standard American English

The original colonies in the New England and Southern regions of the United States were settled almost entirely by English men and women. Their migration was motivated by a complex of social, economic and religious pressures, all of which combined to justify territorial expansion. Being adults, these settlers had acquired the English language before migrating; thus the adoption of this language in the New World was not fortuitous. Despite this, the physical separation of the "two worlds" and their differential social influences were to combine to make the language of the colonists more susceptible to radical change than that of their erstwhile motherland. These changes were to manifest themselves in the areas of syntax, phonology and spelling, with the diversities being more pronounced in some areas than in

others.

Admittedly, the English spoken in America today is, to a great extent, similar to that spoken in England, but no one can deny the fact that the former has taken on some distinctive features and peculiarities of its own. By far the most adventurous and innovative of the peoples of the English-speaking world, Americans have vastly enriched the English language through technological innovations and scientific breakthroughs. New words and phrases are coined from time to time to designate referents which the existing lexicon cannot adequately describe. Some of these new terms are as racy as they are picturesque; others are as objectionable, as they are obnoxious in cultured speech. About these, Sir Ernest Gowers has made observations which are somewhat tinged with both admiration and scorn:

> Today the newcomers (new words) are mostly from the inventive and colourful minds of the Americans. The gates have been opened wide for them by film, radio, television, and comic. We have changed our outlook since Dean Alfred declared eighty years ago that the way the Americans corrupted our language was all of a piece with the character of that nation; with its blunted sense of moral obligation and duty to men. Yet we still have defenders of our tongue who scrutinise these immigrants very closely. That is as it should be, for some of them are certainly undesirables. But we ought not to forget how greatly our language has been enriched by the vigorous word-making habit of the Americans. (Gowers, 1954: 52).

The truth, however, remains that English is a living language and therefore some of its features are changable. Furthermore, linguistic similarity is a function of contact. Social and physical distance plays a dominant role in creating dialectic schisms, for, as Sapir has pointed out, language has a drift. "If there were no breaking up of a language into dialects, if each language continued as a firm, self-contained unity, it would still be constantly moving away from any assignable norm, developing new features unceasingly and gradually transforming itself into a language so different

from its starting point as to be in effect a new language" (Sapir, 1921: 150). It is this property of language, namely, its potential to change over time and space, that largely accounts for dialectic variations among the numerous dialectic entities in America. This will also contribute to the difference between "American Standard" English and its prototype.

Settlement Patterns and Standard American English

Before the dramatic move to explore or "tame" the West, settlement patterns in America seemed to parallel the English patterns in some respects. There were the New England colonies, the Southern colonies, and later a group of states lying between the North and the South in the manner in which East Midland lay between Northern and Southern England. If the English approach to standardization had been adopted, there probably would have emerged from the Midwest a compromise dialect similar to the one adopted in England towards the end of the 14th century. Such a move would have gone a long way towards dispelling the misgivings that foreign observers harbor about the objectivity of the rhetoric of "standard American English".

It is obvious that Americans have not made a serious and concerted effort at standardization. This does not mean that Received Standard and Literary Standard as they are known in England are not evident in the spoken and written language of the cultured class in America. Rather, it means that both standards are more prone to modification in America than they are in England. And, as a society of pragmatic individuals, America tends to judge dialectic superiority mainly in terms of mutual intelligibility or the basic function of language as a medium of human interaction. As a result, members of each dialectal region cling to the standards they have inherited with a tenacity that makes standardization a utopian undertaking.

The dialect of each region is at the same time a source of pride and a mark of identity for its users. Phonologically each variety is treated with contemptuous disapproval by members of other speech communities. And, because of the sarcastic and ethnocentric comments that the different regions make about one another's speech peculiarities and dialects, it is hard to conceive of any that would voluntarily give up its dialect in favor of another.

While grammarians may harbor some notions about what standard American English is, they do recognize regional variations in syntactic and grammatical structures. In a paper prepared for a Sociolinguistics class, Professor Gerald Kelley, of Cornell University's Department of Linguistics, presents a synthesis of grammatical and lexical differences among some speech communities in America. Lexically, Kelley feels that standard shibboleths, such as "ain't" and "he don't", which are non-standard, are nevertheless used by standard speakers for emphasis. And he wonders whether the occurrence of "ain't" in standard English is an indication of its appropriateness in "some style of standard speech". He cites examples of idiomatic structures in New York City and Philadelphia (e.g., "We do X a lot any more") and in the South (e.g. "Wait on") to emphasize the prevalence of syntactic differences in regional dialects (Kelley, "The Notion of a Standard Dialect", p. 9).

It should be stressed, however, that the notion of standard English encompasses not only grammar, syntax and lexicon but phonology. Phonology affects semantic interpretation in that it "classifies the sounds of a language according to the smallest units which account for differences between various utterances" in the language (Hormann, 1970: 30). In a country as vast as the United States, it is difficult to attain phonological similarity.

Based on the postulates of the proponents of generative phonology, knowledge of grammatical and syntactic structure should be helpful for an

understanding of phonological elements in the speech patterns of people from different regions.

Because of the pervasive influence of the mass media on the communicative and other behaviors of young Americans, one would expect a gradual development of a common phonology. According to Kelley, radio and television broadcasters have sought to acquire a pattern of speech devoid of any trace of regional peculiarity. This supra-regional variety was expected to be imitated by the populace, but the persistence of regional phonology indicates that as yet this is not happening,

Geographical mobility has also been viewed by many as a practical means of achieving some degree of phonological similarity among the people of the various regions of America. But, as Kelley points out, there remains in each region a sizable core of conservative and non-mobile population that is so emotionally committed to its distinctive linguistic heritage as to resist phonological change. It should be pointed out, however, that "if there is no phonologically standard dialect in American English (though it should be stressed that perhaps every variety of phonology is devalued by some group, . . . [and] the old ethnic and regional hostilities are very much alive), there does appear to be a real grammatical standard of sorts" (Kelley, p. 8).

No one can quarrel with Kelley's statement on the existence of a "grammatical standard of sorts", because it is corroborative of the view expressed earlier about the use of Received and Literary Standards by the American intelligentsia. It is this "grammatical standard of sorts" that many Americans accept as standard English. But curiously enough, very little is said about the impact of social and physical distance on linguistic diversities between the dominant and minority races in America. Both standard and non-standard

English dialects are acquired by contact - that is, sustained contact with either the dominant race or the minority race(s).

To write volumes of research papers and books on the social and educational problems of minority groups who are bi-dialectical is to beg the question. Bi-dialectalism is just one of several behavioral indices of cultural and ethnic diversity in American society. It is doubtful whether the minority groups are as concerned with their linguistic inadequacy as they are with social and cultural assimilation. It is a matter for speculation, too, whether the parents of inner-city children would not be strongly motivated to encourage their children to acquire a standard variety of English if the opportunity for social and economic mobility were liberalized. At this point, it will be necessary to consider the question of assimilation in some detail.

"The Melting Pot" Concept and Standard English

Israel Zangwill's book, The Melting Pot (1909) was published after his play of the same title had been performed in the previous year in Washington, D.C. It was, in essence, a dramatization of the concept that individuals who break out of shackles of oppression in Europe and emigrate to America are apt to be absorbed into the mainstream of the "land of opportunities". Elaborating on the "Spirit of the American Settlement" and the significance of the Statute of Liberty, David Quixano, a Russian immigrant and one of the stars of the play, addressed Vera Revendal as follows:

> [Don't you] understand that America is God's crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming? Here you stand, good folk, think I, when I see them at Ellis Island, here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that, brothers, for these are the fires of God you've come to . . . A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians - into the Crucible with you all. God is making the American. (Zangwill, 1909: 37)

The melting pot hypothesis can be analyzed in at least two ways. The first approach is to examine the theory as propounded and to see if it mirrors reality in terms of the selectivity with which the "melting" process is effected. The second is to review the author's central assumption in the context of the data presented by Glazer and Moynihan in Beyond the Melting Pot (1970) and to see whether the basis for cultural and ethnic unity exists.

Meltability

The first approach should answer the question, who is meltable in the proverbial pot? Zangwill's play provided a partial answer - Germans, Frenchmen, Irishmen, Englishmen, Jews and Russians - immigrants of European extraction. The corollary is that people of other extractions are unmeltable. But he was writing about what he had experienced, about a climate of opinion that reassured immigrants of the wisdom of their decision to emigrate from Europe, and about a stratification system which was at variance with the European norm. It would be foolhardy to question the validity of his conclusions, since they were derived from social data from Europe and America. While there are arguments to the contrary, it is not untrue to say that assimilation follows a selection pattern, and that this pattern is so ingrained and manifest in society that it needs no discussion.

Of what significance is "meltability" to the acquisition and use of standard English? An answer to this question is crucial to an understanding of the motives of "meltable" immigrants in striving to acquire standard English (and this applies only to the newcomers who are unfamiliar with English). Language is a symbolic system, a vehicle for human interaction and, hopefully, understanding. Immigrants with good prospects of being integrated are apt to learn standard English, since this is one of the criteria by which social competence is assessed.

In the North Central States and other areas which attract Scandinavian immigrants, it is common to hear them say "Vill yee" instead of "Will you" do this or that. But soon after they overcome the stigma attaching to the syntactic and phonological pecularities of their spoken language, they begin to aspire to preeminent political and social positions - positions which are sometimes inaccessible to the "unmeltable" American. Economic and social mobility is often blocked for newcomers who are linguistically handicapped. The desire to overcome this barrier and to become active participants in economic and political matters can provide a great deal of incentive to learn standard American English.

To the extent that language is viewed by "meltable" immigrants as a sine qua non for full integration, its acquisition is of the highest importance. To them, learning standard English and self-actualization are conceptually intertwined, and they engage in the former in order to maximize their satisfaction in the latter.

Sociologically speaking, meltable immigrants have several advantages over the unmeltables. The former can usually buy or rent houses in suburban middle-class neighborhoods where their linguistic and other behaviors can be influenced, altered or modified in "positive" ways. Since English is a habit of speech acquired by exact imitation, immigrants who live among the middle class are more likely to imitate the standard form than those who live among less privileged classes.

Immigrants of assimilable stock who live in middle class environments but who are too old to acquire standard English can at least hope to put their children on the right tracks. The children would attend suburban elementary and secondary schools, which are qualitatively better equipped

with instructional technology and teaching personnel than inner-city schools. In the course of time they would acquire a pattern of speech which, in addition to being functional in human interaction, would embody elements of linguistic demarcation between them and their inner-city counterparts. This then, is the linguistic significance of assimilation. It is hardly necessary to belabor the point by specifying the social advantages and economic correlates of meltability.

Ethnicity

The second approach entails a cursory analysis of the anatomy of the United States from the point of view of ethnicity. This will raise the question: To what extent has Zangwill's central claim stood the test of time? Glazer and Moynihan (1970) have shown that America, rather than evolving as a national entity, is gravitating towards ethnic separation (if not becoming a multi-national conglomerate). In business, politics and other significant human endeavors, there seems to be a tendency to organize activities within clearly discernible ethnic boundaries. Thus, while outsiders may tend to conceive of America as a unified culture, many Americans think of themselves mainly in terms of their race, ethnicity, and religion. However, this appears to be more an urban than a rural phenomenon.

After delineating the six major sub-cultural groups in New York City, Glazer and Moynihan observed that the overall influence of these groups has overshadowed the prestige and glamour which previously attached to occupational identities. This is due in part to the curious overlap of ethnicity with occupation and of ethnicity with religion, and in part to the declining role of Catholicism as a force for unity between people of Irish and Italian descent.

The six ethnic groups identified in New York City by these authors are given below. They are given in order of ethnic visibility rather than prestige or respectability. They are the Blacks, the Puerto Ricans, the Jews, the Italians, the Irish and the WASP's. The authors say that the WASP identity "is a created identity...largely forged in New York City in order to identify those who are not otherwise ethnically identified and who, while a small minority in the city, represent what is felt to be the 'majority' for the rest of the country" (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970: xxxi).

These authors' reactions to Zangwill's "Melting Pot" hypothesis are summarized in one sentence: "The point about the melting pot is that it did not happen" (p. 290). Even at the time that Zangwill's Melting Pot was published, it aroused storms of protest by some Jewish critics who feared being racially and religiously assimilated, and thus losing their Jewish identity - those elements of Judaism that mark them out as a separate group. Yet there were some that hailed Zangwill's play as a most authentic dramatization of the horrible oppression of the Jew in his isolation in Russia.

These viewpoints are indicative of the divergent and ambivalent attitudes that members of different minority groups hold about their status in America. Some of them are quite eager to be identified as "the Americans," while others wish to retain and expouse some elements of the tradition of their forebears. Both of these attitudes interact with a number of socio-economic variables to predispose the members of minority groups to acquire either the standard or non-standard American English.

The Significance of Bi-dialectalism

The United States is made up of different ethnic and racial groups. Even if the country is analyzed in terms of the two dominant and distinct racial groups - white and black - it would not be safe to assume that either

is monoethnic, unless all whites are presumed to have come from Europe and all blacks from Africa. But that would also be superficial analysis, because neither Europe nor Africa is monoethnic. The effects of racial discrimination in America are manifest not only in residential patterns but also in educational and other institutional arrangements.

Children are great imitators. They imitate the linguistic and life styles of the most important adults to them - their parents. If the parents in a particular neighborhood speak non-standard English, it is preposterous to expect their offspring to speak standard English. The language acquired by such children will differ grammatically and phonologically from that acquired by their counterparts in middle-class neighborhoods.

Labov's study Language in the Inner City (1970) indicates that startling differences exist between white and black children in their pronunciation patterns. He found, for instance, that the letter "r" in "four o'clock" is not pronounced by black speakers in the Ghetto. This may reflect the fact that most blacks in New York City are first- or second-generation migrants from the rural areas of the deep South. Also the words "Carol" and "terrace" were pronounced "Cal" and "test" respectively by the inner-city speakers in his study. Labov feels that this speech peculiarity, that is, a noticeable absence of intervocalic "r"in Ghetto pronunciation patterns, might pose a problem to teachers who attempt to teach black children standard spelling, especially when such teachers are unfamiliar with the children's plight.

Furthermore, he found differences between the white and black children in the way they pronounced certain homonyms. Among these are:

pin = pen	beer = bear	poor = pour
tin = ten	cheer = chair	moor = more
Ruth = roof	death = deaf	(Labov, 1970: 20)

This evidence substantiates the assertion that when it is isolated a human group adopts a linguistic norm which will vary from the parent language in proportion to the degree of isolation that the group experiences. There is considerable social and physical distance between inner-city dwellers and those living in affluent neighborhoods. Because of this, slum dwellers have developed a sound (phonological) system that differs from the standard forms heard in various speech communities.

Slum dwellers hardly engage in an intimate relationship with non-slum dwellers, except in the classroom. The people with whom they interact (with mutual satisfaction) are peers and relatives in the same neighborhood. They will seem absurdly snobbish to their parents, their friends, and their peers if they say "It isn't always her fault" when they want their receivers to understand "It don't all be her fault" (Labov, 1970: 11). A ghetto school boy who deviates from the "standard" linguistic norm of his speech community will probably antagonize his peers and friends without acquiring new friends from among those whose language he seeks to imitate.

It would not be an overstatement to say that every American is bi-dialectal in a sense. A college professor will sound 'funny' and pretentious at home if he speaks the same way he does in the classroom. This applies also to slum dwellers who speak standard English. And if the slum dweller's sense of personal worth is reinforced only in the ghetto, it will be stupid for him to subscribe to values which are incongruent with those of his community.

The advantages of acquiring and using standard English cannot be overstressed. What needs to be emphasized is the need to diagnose the social and economic problems underlying the acquisition of non-standard English. Learning implies motivation. The difficulty of getting the so-called

culturally or linguistically disadvantaged to learn standard English may be due to factors extrinsic to the school environment. Consequently, money spent on such programs may not serve any useful purpose except to dramatize the will to "help" the disadvantaged.

Refusal to learn standard English may represent an overt manifestation by ghetto youth of a feeling of disloyalty to the establishment. Grodzins' analysis of Japanese-Americans' declaration of disloyalty to America over the move to relocate them against their will during World War II is quite revealing. Despite the fact that they had been granted American citizenship, first-generation Japanese were still classified as enemy aliens. Grodzins' portrayal of the underlying psychological problems reads as follows:

> Loyalties change as social situation changes and individuals assess previous experience, present plight, and future promise. Loyalty to his nation comes easily if an individual's job and career are secure,...if he feels accepted and secure, if his relationship to the larger community is not restrained. Disrupt his career,...isolate him, persecute him, show your disdain for him, and you plant the seeds of his disaffection. His allegiance will withstand maltreatment. But the multiplication of abuses will weaken his loyalty; and as abuse continues, loyalty to nation erodes away -- the more completely and rapidly if he believes that the government is directly responsible for his difficulties. Loyalty does not thereby disappear. It is transferred to another cause, another group, perhaps another nation. (Grodzins, 1955: 582).

People who speak two dialects must be commended for their dexterity in switching from one to the other when the occasion arises. It may be too much to expect that all ghetto children will acquire such dexterity. Within their highly circumscribed communities, ghetto dwellers have evolved a dialect which is functional enough. The eradication of this dialect, which merely typifies other problems inherent in ethnic isolation of some minority groups in America, calls for a bolder approach to social reform than the fragmented efforts of English language teachers can accomplish.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this paper to identify some socio-economic and situational variables impinging on the acquisition of either the standard or non-standard variety of English in America. Because of variations in the degree to which the different ethnic groups have been or can be assimilated, there appears to be a resurgence of ethnicity, and this is often evidenced in patterns of political loyalty and geographical residency. Ethnic groups which are in constant and meaningful interaction with well "melted" American groups are more likely to speak standard English than those which are not, since syntactic and phonological similarity is a function of intense physical and social contact.

The term "ghetto" as used in this paper refers to any residential area which is solidly ethnic, especially one occupied by low-income families with less than adequate contact with the larger society. It is usually in such a setting that a "sub-standard" variety of English is spoken. To question the right of people in such an area to communicate in a variety of English they find mutually intelligible to them is to beg the question.

Bi-dialectalism is a linguistic component of the poverty and minority syndrome. It is a problem which has been rendered more visible than other inequities by America's compulsory and free education policy, the implementation of which involves inter-ethnic contact. Most ghetto youths have values, beliefs, and expectations that differ in significant respects from those held by their teachers. All the talk about educating the "culturally disadvantaged" has not produced any value-free methodology. Recognizing this calls for a great deal of sensitivity and empathy on the part of the teacher.

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